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the central preoccupation of the last years of his life. It was interesting indeed, when he spoke upon any platform and any subject, to see how many angles of approach he could find to that *one* subject which was nearest his heart, the new gallery, which should some day house a dozen different societies of artists.

I have said that some artists are recorders, some inventors, some creators and some are dreamers of dreams. Recorder and creator he certainly was. While he was still a

child, he was for a while a little messenger boy, and he never ceased to be a messenger, bringing stimulus of words and example, writing his name with Abou ben Adhem's as a lover of his fellows. And a dreamer he was of dreams; of a dream we fully believe shall come true, when New York shall have a great gallery all its own and which we may link in our thought with the memory of the devoted President of the Academy, John Alexander.

E. H. B.

JOHN W. ALEXANDER: ORGANIZER AND LEADER*

BY HOWARD RUSSELL BUTLER

Vice-president of the National Academy of Design

WE ARE met tonight to do honor to the memory of one who truly loved the beautiful—who not only left with us important and inspiring creations of his own genius, but who labored incessantly and with a zeal which far outran his physical strength, to encourage others in their efforts to reach the goal attained by him through bitter struggle.

I will not in the few minutes allotted to me attempt any discussion of the merits of his art. His works speak to us directly and more eloquently than could any words of mine.

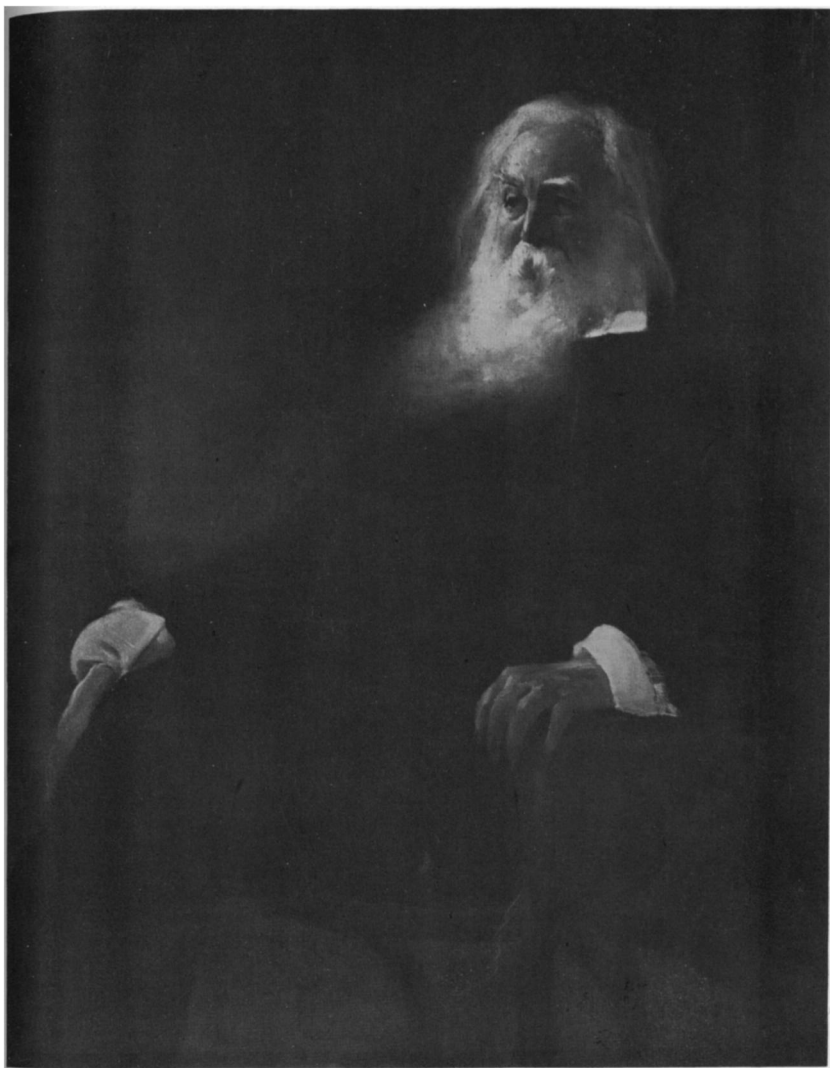
It is on the subject of his untiring efforts to awaken and cultivate an interest in true art in this country that I have been requested to say a few words, and particularly I am asked to touch on the valuable services rendered by him in organizing and conducting the work of the societies devoted to art in the City of New York. It was through these that he was incessantly using his influence for the advancement of the great cause to which he dedicated his life.

When Alexander finally settled in New York his reputation had been well established in France. He was warmly received into all the prominent bodies of artists here and it was not long before his ability and willingness to work made him a leader in most of them.

To understand the part taken by Alexander one must realize the many obstacles which have stood in the pathway of native art in this country and especially in the City of New York. There was a great lack of interest on the part of the public and much apathy and indifference on the part of dealers and patrons, who held that no good art could come out of American studios. Then there was a great schism in the ranks of the profession itself. The now historic struggle, which began about the time of the Centennial Exhibition in 1876 and which lasted until 1906, between the older and the younger schools was at its height when he began his work here. It was the old academy on Twenty-third street against the Society of American Artists on Fifty-seventh street. Whatever the merits of each side, and there is little use of discussing them now, the problem before Alexander was largely one of reconciliation. Nothing reconciles like the discovery that both sides are working for the same great aim, in this case the advancement of true art, and Alexander was always quick to discover sincerity of purpose. His sympathy was with those who were really striving. He was very soon "persona grata" in both camps.

The sale of the Twenty-third street building had left the Academy of Design

*An address delivered at a meeting held by the American Federation of Arts in commemoration of the life and services of the late John W. Alexander in the Corcoran Gallery of Art on the evening of May 18, 1916.



PORTRAIT OF WALT WHITMAN

JOHN W. ALEXANDER

FROM A THISTLE PRINT. COPYRIGHT, DETROIT PUBLISHING CO.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



THE BLUE BOWL

JOHN W. ALEXANDER

THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

without a home and the effort to bring the two bodies into at least a physical companionship by locating them side by side on Fifty-seventh street had failed through the unwillingness of the older academicians. But an ever widening group, led by Frederick Deilman, who was then President of the Academy, realized that the end of the long fight was approaching. The forces were working toward union and the result was a greatly enlarged and liberalized academy. Under the agreement of 1906 the Society of American Artists was absorbed into the Academy and the constitution of the latter was so broadened that it stands today as a most liberal body of artists. It was to the Presidency of this greater, rejuvenated Academy that Alexander was elected in 1909 and from which he was removed by death in 1915.

The problems before Alexander as president of the Academy were difficult, if not insoluble. They were problems for a man of robust physique with all his time free to attack them. But Alexander was then engaged in painting portraits and decorations of great importance. He was also organizing and developing the School Art League. As president of the MacDowell Club he was endeavoring to help the younger aspirants in all branches of the Fine Arts. He was also active in the Fine Arts Federation, the Architectural League and the society called "The Mural Painters."

The problem of the Academy involved its relation to the outside artists, those who had not yet made the Academy. Here Alexander's policy—well supported by the members—was liberality itself. Perhaps he was too liberal. I believe that during his administration more works were admitted to the Exhibitions of the Academy by non-members than by members—in some cases the number of "outside pictures" as they were called rising to about 60 per cent of the whole. And this while the prominent exhibition committees in other large cities of the Union were acknowledging the supremacy of the Academy by relying upon it to furnish the backbone of their exhibitions. The statistics show from 40 to 60 per cent in most cases; and yet in its own exhibitions the Academy has given the preference in numbers to non-members.

Then there was the relation of the Academy to the public. How to overcome indifference to American Art, how to secure at least a small fraction of patronage for works by Americans, how to build up an American school, how to cultivate art on nothing a year. These were some of the problems which were constantly in Alexander's mind and with other artists, who had realized the great economic value of Art, as understood in Europe but wholly unappreciated here, he labored to prove to the authorities that they were killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

By this time the enlarged Academy had wholly outgrown its home, and a more ample building, commensurate with its important work and its value to the community, became a necessity. In no other way could the Academy fulfil its mission, and so, placing it above all other objects, he devoted the last years of his life to a campaign to secure the much needed Art Building. Time and again, before gatherings of artists and laymen, regardless of the reasons which had brought them together, Alexander waxed eloquent on the subject of an adequate home for the Academy. This had been a theme dear to my own heart for years and it naturally brought us together, and toward this result—though not always agreed as to how the problem was to be solved—we worked side by side for many years, meeting I regret to say with defeat after defeat.

We had failed in the Fifty-seventh street project in 1896. We failed again in the Lenox Library site project in 1904. Then came the "Arsenal Site" project in Central Park which was killed by the city. So also was the Bryant Park plan. Then came the project to place the Academy above the railroad yard north of the Grand Central Depot. But the terms of the lease offered and the final withdrawal of the option by the railroad companies defeated the plan. The hope here had been to erect a veritable "Salon Building" in which all branches of art could be simultaneously exhibited.

Why, you will ask, should it be so difficult to secure a site in New York for so obvious a need as a Fine Arts Building? If a proper site were forthcoming there is little doubt that the funds needed could



A MOTHER

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JOHN W. ALEXANDER

be raised. The answer to the question is that New York was badly planned at the start. There are no appropriate sites within the city limits for institutions such as the National Academy of Design. The gridiron system of streets offers no open sites and no approaches. The only diagonal,

Broadway, is monopolized by trade. The visitor from New York walks the streets of Washington with envy in his soul. The gridiron system has been a curse to American towns.

The enthusiasm and the interest awakened in the idea of an Art Salon had

brought all the other exhibiting societies to the door of the Academy asking that they, too, should be admitted to participate in the plan. To this the Academy generously responded and the result was the founding of the National Academy Association; an organization composed of ten societies and having on its board of forty an equal number of artists and of lay members. This organization, incorporated in 1911 with an excellent charter granted by special act of the New York State Legislature, is largely controlled by the Academy and it is agreed that any building erected through

its agency shall be known as the National Academy Building.

Alexander was elected the first president of the National Academy Association and it was through that organization that his last efforts were made to realize his great hope.

He has not lived to see his plans succeed—that has been denied him—but they will succeed some day. We, who are left, labor on, inspired by the recollection of his zeal and confident that the seed which he planted will yet bear fruit.

H. R. B.

JOHN W. ALEXANDER, ILLUSTRATOR AND MAN*

BY CHARLES DANA GIBSON

JOHN ALEXANDER gave a dignity to every field of art he entered, and it is no wonder that we illustrators are proud of the fact that he was one of us. I, an illustrator, would remind you of that, and it is with the greatest pride and esteem, and affection that I do so. There is no need of us quarreling as to which particular group has the best title to him, for he only belongs to his country.

It is appropriate that we should meet in the capital of this country to honor a man whose influence extends from ocean to ocean. A better world is being born and a broader America is spreading out before us, broader in many ways, broader in things artistic. I think a sure proof of that is to be found in this very meeting, for we meet to pledge ourselves to strive in every way that we are able to live up to the splendid example John Alexander set, and to strive as best we may to add to the artistic credit of our country.

John Alexander was a marvelous combination of qualities. To begin with, he was absolutely sane at a time when some artists attempted to feign insanity even

when they were not wholly so. He had unbounded courage; you only had to look at him to know that. There never was a more loyal or unselfish friend; he was incapable of envy, and no man ever had, and no man ever deserved, a happier home.

I do not often quote poetry, but when I think of him I am reminded of these four lines of Kipling's "If," a poem I am rather fond of:

"He could dream and not make dreams his master

He could think and not make thoughts his aim.

He could meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same."

John Alexander was all that an artist and a man should be. We have spoken of his great gifts as a painter, of his great service to his country as an uplifter of thought, and as an educator; but among his friends and in the presence of his works, the thought that is uppermost in our hearts—the hearts of those who knew him—is and always will be love and affection for the man and his memory.

C. D. G.

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